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Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/163. The focus of the report is the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes and the contribution of family policies to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the areas of the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, work-family balance and gender equality, and the promotion of social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/163, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-second session on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes. In the resolution, Governments were encouraged to continue to make every possible effort to realize the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes and to develop strategies and programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities to address national priorities relating to family issues.

2. In addition, the General Assembly, in that resolution, invited Member States to invest in a variety of family-oriented policies and programmes, as important tools for, inter alia, fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequality, promoting work-family balance and gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity, to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. In the present report, the importance of investing in family policies and programmes, as tools to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, is highlighted, with particular emphasis on the issues noted above. Information is also provided on initiatives at the national and regional levels presented by Member States at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly and the fifty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development. The activities of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in support of the implementation of the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes are noted, and conclusions and recommendations are put forward.

II. Family policies in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Reducing poverty, social exclusion and inequality

4. Poverty disrupts and endangers family functioning, including family activities and interactions, such as cognitive engagement with children, physical health habits, intrafamily relationships and social connectedness. When families live in poverty, financial and physical security is scarce and access to basic resources is limited. As a result, family relationships suffer and children grow up in unstable environments. Parents who live in poverty may be at a higher risk of domestic violence and substance addictions. Furthermore, when parents are deprived of their basic needs, they may fail to support their children and resort to less effective, coercive, punitive or inconsistent parenting, while their children may be at a higher risk of experiencing problems in their later educational, professional and personal development.[1]

5. In developed countries, poverty is mostly associated with specific family characteristics, such as single parenthood, migration status or the parents' educational level. In developing countries, poverty can, to a large extent, be attributed to structural factors, including informal types of employment with no risk-averting mechanisms for protecting workers in the event of poor health or accidents, and no pension benefits to protect them in old age.[2]

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[1] See Zitha Mokomane, "Family-oriented policies for poverty and hunger reduction in developing countries and indicators of progress", paper prepared for the expert group meeting on family policies and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, held in New York on 12 and 13 May 2016. Materials from the meeting are available from www.un.org/development/desa/family/meetings-events/family-policies-and-the-2030-sustainable-development-agenda.html.

[2] Ibid.

6. Poverty continues to be a gendered phenomenon, and the gender disparities in poverty are rooted in unequal access to economic resources and productive assets. In many developing countries, women still have limited access to land and employment. Statutory and customary laws restrict the access of women to productive resources and their control over household economic resources. Working-age women in developing and developed countries alike are more likely to be poorer than men when they have dependent children. Similarly, older women, especially those living alone, are more likely to be poor than men.[3] Poverty in general and child poverty in particular refers to not only monetary deprivation but also disadvantages in access to nutrition, primary health care and education. Undernourishment in childhood can lead to stunting. A lack of access to primary health care may result in death from preventable causes. Limited access to high-quality education reduces prospects for future gainful employment.

7. Studies on the multidimensional poverty of children in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that 247 million of a total of 368 million children under the age of 18 experience 2 to 5 deprivations that threaten their survival and development.[4] Furthermore, according to current trends, 9 out of 10 children living in extreme poverty[5] will live in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, millions of children who live above the extreme poverty threshold experience deprivations in other dimensions of their lives. Even in countries of the European Union, children are at a higher risk of monetary poverty than adults, and, in the 41 most affluent countries, nearly 77 million children lived in relative poverty in 2014.[6]

8. In view of these continuing challenges and negative trends, family-centred interventions with a focus on the multidimensional aspects of poverty are key in the fight against poverty and can help to achieve particular targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1. First and foremost, it is vital to create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels on the basis of pro-poor, pro-children and gender-sensitive development strategies. In particular, family policies directed at the provision of social protection and access to basic services have had the largest impact on family poverty reduction. Non-contributory old-age pensions have had a similar impact.

9. While universal social protection systems covering all citizens are important for building public support and solidarity, additional targeted benefits should be offered to the most vulnerable families to reduce inequalities. The provision of childcare also plays a major role in poverty reduction by enabling women to be fully employed.[7]

10. In many countries, the main forms of family support include birth grants, maternity benefits and child and childcare allowances. Additional benefits are granted for large and single-parent families and families with children with disabilities.

11. In the European Union, a child allowance is considered a right of the child and depends only on the age of the child and its disability status, not the income of the

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[3] *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8), chap. 8. Available from https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html.

[4] Multidimensional child deprivation is defined as the non-fulfilment of children's rights in the main dimensions of survival, development, protection and participation. The analysis for sub-Saharan Africa is based on five dimensions: health, nutrition, water, sanitation and housing for children under 5; and education, information, water, sanitation and housing for children aged 5 to 17. See www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief7_multidimensional_child_deprivation_monetary_poverty_ssa_layout.pdf.

[5] Extreme poverty is defined for the purposes of the present report as living on less than $1.90 a day.

[6] See United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child* (New York, June 2016).

[7] See the report of the expert group meeting held in New York on 12 and 13 May 2016, "Family policies and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda".

family. The general consensus is that a universal monetary benefit to cover the minimum cost of raising a child should be provided. Additional targeted allowances are usually offered for people in vulnerable situations. It is also important to recognize that families may have other vulnerable members, such as adult children with disabilities, under their care. Consequently, a life-course approach recognizing the needs of all family members is needed.[8]

12. Low-quality jobs and vulnerable employment contribute to persistent poverty and inequality. Globally, 1.5 billion people are in vulnerable employment, accounting for more than 46 per cent of total employment. In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, more than 70 per cent of workers are in vulnerable employment. Besides having limited access to contributory social protection schemes, workers in vulnerable employment might suffer from low productivity and earnings. There are also major gender gaps in job quality, and women face a 25 to 35 per cent higher risk of being in vulnerable employment than men in certain countries in Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States.[9]

13. A new approach to social provision, entailing a transition from social assistance to social activation and focusing mostly on stimulating labour potential, has been adopted in some countries. For instance, in the Russian Federation, under the Social Support of Citizens programme, cash payments are awarded for participation in specific activities. The programme's goal is to reduce poverty among low-income families willing to participate in assisted job searches, public works, vocational training and self-employment. Approximately 40 per cent of low-income families with children came out of poverty as a result of the programme. Similarly, in Kazakhstan, the Government developed a social protection programme based on the principle of "mutual obligations" for supporting private farming and self-employment.[10]

14. Access to decent employment and the extension of social protection floors to all are the most effective ways to ensure that those living below the poverty line can "lift themselves and their families above any given poverty threshold" and thus attain Sustainable Development Goal 1.[11] Investing more in decent jobs and ensuring work-family balance for working families are also indispensable in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

B. Promoting work-family balance and gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

15. Work-family conflict is on the rise and is becoming a global phenomenon in developed and developing countries alike. Growing work demands combined with job insecurity and a lack of policies to promote work-family balance have resulted in growing tensions between work and family life. The work-family pressures have been harder on women, who are still primarily responsible for the care of not only children but also often older persons or those with disabilities in families.[12]

[8] Ibid.

[9] See International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends 2016* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2016).

[10] See Esuna Dugarova, "Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 1: poverty eradication through family support policies and social protection measures in transition countries", paper prepared for the expert group meeting held in New York on 12 and 13 May 2016.

[11] ILO, *World Employment Social Outlook*, p. 24.

[12] See Bahira Sherif Trask, "Improving health and well-being by promoting gender equality and empowerment: the need for a family-centred implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals 1-5", paper prepared for the expert group meeting held in New York on 12 and 13 May 2016.

16. Unpaid house- and care work is carried out disproportionately by women across the world. Such unequal distribution gives rise to tensions between work and family life, negatively affecting the well-being of all family members. The absence or inadequate level of parental leave, affordable childcare and flexible working arrangements has many negative consequences. One of them is lower female labour participation, as women tend to opt out of the labour market to assume family responsibilities. The conflict between work and family has also been associated with a worse quality of relations between spouses and a higher risk of family dysfunction.[13]

17. Decent employment must ensure work-family balance, which is the top work-related issue for working parents. There is a growing recognition that a job that prevents workers from balancing their work commitments with the need to care for their family members is not a decent job. Moreover, the unresolved tensions between care and work represent a major concern for women and affect their access to good-quality work.[14]

18. The European Parliament identified work-family balance as a top area in need of improvement in the European Union, noting that women devote nearly one-fifth of their free time to caregiving and household responsibilities, whereas men devote less than a tenth of their free time contributing to those activities. As a result of their caring obligations, the hourly earnings of women are on average 16.7 per cent lower and their pensions 40.2 per cent lower than those of men.[15]

19. It is important to note that work-family conflict may disproportionately affect parents in low-income families, as the demands for care of family members may restrict the range of jobs available to them. In fact, research demonstrates that young women may assume lower-paid jobs, often in the informal economy, to be able to cope with family responsibilities. Consequently, women are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. For example, in the United States of America, women make up two thirds of the nearly 20 million workers in the low-wage workforce, although they make up less than half of all workers.[16] Moreover, some employers discriminate against women with family responsibilities, and full-time working mothers typically earn only 69 per cent of what fathers earn.[17]

20. The consequences of even temporarily opting out of the labour market owing to caregiving responsibilities extend later in the lives of women. For instance, in Latin America, 52 per cent of women reported that seeking more time with their families was the main reason why they gave up their jobs mid-career or even when they had reached senior levels.[18] Such choices have consequences when women get older. As social security systems are largely connected to remunerated employment, older women with work interruptions, lower salaries and lower levels of contributions are at a higher risk of falling into poverty.

21. In view of the above, ensuring work-family balance is important for achieving greater gender equality. Despite the commitments and efforts made by many Governments to establish policies and programmes to promote gender equality, inequality and imbalances continue. In parts of the developing world, many girls and women still do not have access to economic, educational and nutritional

[13] See Mokomane, "Family-oriented policies".

[14] ILO, *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2016), p. 66.

[15] Data as at 2014. See www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20170306STO65206/gender-balance-five-areas-for-improvement.

[16] National Women's Law Center, "Underpaid and overloaded: women in low-wage jobs", 2014, p. 1. Available from www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf.

[17] Ibid., p. 32.

[18] See ILO, *Women at Work*.

resources. They are thus more vulnerable to poverty, hunger and health problems. The situation persists because of the unequal relationship between men and women entrenched in cultural ideas and social relationships.[19]

22. Such limited success of gender empowerment efforts is also linked to persistent discrimination, violence and certain cultural norms. Furthermore, the limited success of women-oriented policies and programmes could be partially linked to the lack of a family perspective in overall gender equality efforts. The contemporary academic and policy orientation targets policies and programmes principally at the individual level. Such an approach obscures the fact that individuals do not live in a vacuum but have family relationships. In particular, decisions about many aspects of the lives of women and girls are taken by families. The family itself may support or be detrimental to the lives of girls and women.[20]

23. It is therefore critical to take into account the family dimensions that may constrain or promote the empowerment of women, adopt a family perspective accompanied by a gender equality perspective and focus on promoting family decisions that improve the health and education prospects of girls and women.

24. Childcare remains socially stratified, and children from low-income families have more limited opportunities to receive formal childcare than children from higher-income families. Although there is ample evidence demonstrating that investing in young children through high-quality childcare results in higher educational achievement, better health, improved job opportunities and even higher earnings later in life, so far very few countries see childcare as a public good.

25. Besides the human development benefits, promoting access to childcare services pays better economic returns in terms of higher tax revenues, reduced social spending and overall stronger public budgets. It also contributes to improved child development, leading to better labour market outputs and reduced intergenerational transmission of inequality.[21]

26. Childcare provision may be financed from tax revenues or social insurance through subsidies to care providers or by offering direct services and providing subsidies to parents. In some countries, such as France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the two strategies are combined.[22]

27. Some Governments offer financial support to families with children, sometimes in the form of tax breaks, and it is up to the families to choose the service or facility they prefer. In the Netherlands, for instance, parents, employers and the Government each cover one third of the cost of formal childcare for preschool and school-age children up to the age of 13, with additional Government contributions for low-income families. Such an arrangement makes childcare more accessible to families of all incomes.

28. Investing in childcare is essential for promoting maternal employment, as it helps to empower women and supports their access to formal jobs. Furthermore, higher public spending on policies to promote work-family balance is associated with higher female employment-to-population ratios.[23]

[19] See Trask, "Improving health and well-being by promoting gender equality and empowerment".
[20] Ibid.
[21] See James J. Heckman and Lakshmi K. Raut, "Intergenerational long-term effects of preschool: structural estimates from a discrete dynamic programming model", discussion paper No. 7415, Bonn, Germany, Institute for the Study of Labour, May 2013.
[22] See ILO, *Women at Work*.
[23] See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Family Database. Available from www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

29. The expansion of family leave provisions, especially maternity protection for all women, is effective if carried out in line with international labour standards, including the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Of the 185 countries for which data were available, 102 countries granted at least 14 weeks of maternity leave and, of the 167 countries that provided maternity leave cash benefits, 77 provided at least two thirds of the woman's prior earnings for the 14 weeks, in accordance with the ILO Convention.

30. The provision of paternal leave is often considered to be a gender-transformative leave policy, since it has the great potential to promote a more equal distribution of unpaid household and care responsibilities between women and men. Paternal leave benefits the child and results in higher job and home-life satisfaction for men and improved health and labour market outcomes for mothers.[24] Fathers who take paternal leave immediately after the birth of their children are more involved with their children later in life, which in turn contributes to gender equality in the home.

31. Although the number of countries offering paternal leave is increasing, such leave, despite its numerous benefits, is available in only 94 of the 170 countries with available data and ranges from 1 to 30 days. Nine countries offer 30 days, including 8 with paid leave, while 42 countries offer from 1 to 6 days of paternal leave, including 37 with paid leave. Recent research in 21 European countries showed that men were more likely to take leave when it was non-transferable and fully, or nearly fully, paid.[25]

32. Some countries, such as Belgium, Germany and Norway, offer flexibility as to when parental leave may be taken. Parents have the option to take the leave in one block immediately after the birth of the child or as time off from work until the child reaches school age. The leave can be taken on a full- or part-time basis. In the Russian Federation, parental leave benefits can be transferred to grandparents or other caregivers. In some countries, parental leave benefits are used to offset childcare costs and encourage women to return to work. In Slovakia, parents are able to receive the full parental leave benefit no matter how long they have worked or what their level of earnings is. They may also exchange the parental leave benefit for a childcare benefit to partially cover childcare costs provided by an institution or a registered childcarer.[26]

33. Another aspect of work-family balance is workplace flexibility, which may include telecommuting, a variety of accommodating schedules, such as flexitime and a compressed workweek, and flexible use of annual leave and part-time work. Work flexibility is beneficial for both employees and employers, as it has been found to reduce stress and diminish absenteeism and employee turnover.[27]

34. In some countries, workers are legally entitled to request flexible work schedules as well as teleworking.[28] In Denmark and the Netherlands, flexible work arrangements are accessible to all workers, irrespective of their sex and family status, which reduces the penalty associated with being a worker with family

[24] See Ruti Levtov and others, "State of the world's fathers report: executive summary", Washington, D.C., Promundo, Rutgers, Save the Children, Sonke Gender Justice and the MenEngage Alliance, 2015.

[25] ILO, *Women at Work*, figure 17.

[26] See Bahira Sherif Trask, "Alleviating the stress on working families: promoting family-friendly workplace policies", *National Council on Family Relations Policy Brief*, vol. 2, issue 1 (January 2017).

[27] Ibid.

[28] Argentina, Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands and Portugal.

responsibilities. In Latin America, collective bargaining has been essential for achieving family-friendly working schemes.[29]

35. In some countries, social cooperatives and enterprises provide educational and health services through community centres for children and older persons, health-care facilities and home care. In Italy, the organization Consorzio Pan — Servizi per l'infanzia brings together social enterprises and a bank to create high-quality yet affordable childcare services. The organization's cooperative approach involves families, provides on-the-job training and offers flexible schedules for working parents, some of whom are members of the cooperative.[30]

36. In addition to caring for their children, more and more working families are faced with the new responsibility of caring for their older parents for longer. For example, in the United Kingdom, one in nine people in the workforce combine paid work with unpaid care for a frail family member who is older or ill or a person with a disability. Although long-term care (i.e. public or private support services provided to older persons with limited self-care ability owing to physical or mental conditions) is a growing concern for families, it is rarely included in work-family balance considerations.[31]

37. With extended families growing smaller as a result of rapid urbanization and demographic trends, long-term care is bound to increase in importance. Nevertheless, the majority of countries do not provide any legal protection for long-term care, and more than 48 per cent of the population of persons aged 65 and over in the 46 countries with information available are not covered by any national legislation. Another 46.3 per cent are largely excluded because of restrictive means-testing regulations covering only the most vulnerable. ILO estimates a global shortage of 13.6 million formal long-term care workers, with the highest deficits in Asia and the Pacific.[32] Investments in the training of long-term care workers and better coordination between various health- and social-care schemes and systems are therefore needed.[33]

38. In some countries, family-friendly companies are officially recognized. For instance, in the Republic of Korea, under the Best Family-Friendly Management programme, companies that promote work-family balance, including through the proper implementation of leave entitlements and flexible workplace arrangements, are officially certified by the Government and enjoy a wide range of benefits, such as lower interest rates for bank loans. From 2008 to 2015, the number of certified companies grew from 14 to 956.[34]

C. Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity

39. By 2030, two thirds of the global population will be living in cities. The fast pace of urbanization and demographic changes is challenging for Governments, societies, families and individuals. Such changes are especially challenging for families with older persons and persons with disabilities. Cities offer opportunities but often cannot keep up with the inflows of people from rural areas and provide adequate housing and other services.

[29] See ILO, *Women at Work*.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] See OECD, "Korea's work-life balance policies for sustainable growth", 2015. Available from www.oecd.org/korea/korea-work-life-balance-policies.htm.

40. In some Western countries, including the United States, the number of multigenerational households (defined as households that consist of at least two adult generations or households with a skipped generation, such as a grandchild living with a grandparent) is on the rise.[35] Experts note that the number would be higher if not for zoning and building codes that favour single-family homes.[36]

41. Urban planning that takes into account the needs of different generations and facilitates interactions between generations is indispensable for intergenerational solidarity. The family-friendly cities of tomorrow should be accessible to all generations and people with different needs. In order to make cities truly liveable and friendly to all generations, public spaces where people of different ages can meet and interact are needed. Policies and programmes developed at the family, community and national levels, ranging from specific legislative measures, tax incentives and community programmes that promote multigenerational living arrangements to investments in shared intergenerational sites and other initiatives supporting interactions between generations, are key in this regard.

42. Some Governments support policies to promote intergenerational living arrangements. In Singapore, couples or single persons living in governmental flats in the same town or estate as or within a short distance from their parents' residence are eligible for so-called proximity housing grants. Thousands of couples or single persons have taken advantage of that grant and other types of grants, such as the newly-wed grant. As a result, families have greater chances of living together and at a lower cost. The Government of Germany funds 550 multigenerational community houses on an annual basis. Such community housing has a common space, such as a garden, laundry room, café or playroom, saving on costs and promoting intergenerational communication at the same time.[37]

43. Family-friendly policies at the municipal level that support intergenerational interactions make cities more liveable. An example of such a policy is the Age-Friendly D.C. strategic plan of Washington, D.C., for 2012-2017, which was designed with guidance from the World Health Organization and covers 10 areas, including intergenerational gardening, community building and intergenerational housing arrangements.[38] The plan promotes volunteerism and information and communications technology training for older persons.[39]

44. As university students around the world face a shortage of accommodation, some European countries, such as France, the Netherlands and Spain, have successfully launched special initiatives to reduce the burden of housing by opening spare rooms in retirement houses to young students. So-called cohabitation programmes are usually offered at a comparably reasonable price and result in socialization between the different generations living under the same roof.[40]

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[35] In a study carried out in 2014 by the Pew Research Centre, it was indicated that 18 per cent of the population of the United States lived in a multigenerational household, up from about 15 per cent in 2000.

[36] See Chris Kirkham, "Hurdles to multigenerational living: kitchens and visible second entrances", *Wall Street Journal*, 14 March 2016.

[37] Germany, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, "What is a multigenerational house?". Available from www.mehrgenerationenhaeuser.de/mehrgenerationenhaeuser/was-ist-ein-mehrgenerationenhaus/.

[38] For example, the first Generations of Hope community, Genesis, opened in November 2015. In Genesis, which consists of 27 apartments, young mothers transitioning out of foster care, persons over the age of 50 and families interested in living in a supported community live together.

[39] See the Age-Friendly D.C. 2016 progress report. Available from https://agefriendly.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/agefriendly/page_content/attachments/AFDC-2016-ProgressReport-508-1.3-2.pdf.

[40] See Marcus Roberts, "Intergenerational living at retirement homes", *Mercatornet*, 16 April 2015. Available from www.mercatornet.com/demography/view/15953.

45. Many civil society organizations support intergenerational initiatives. Generations United, which is based in the United States, has established an awards programme to recognize vibrant, healthy intergenerational communities that effectively engage, serve and honour all generations as they advance policies and practices stimulating collaboration. Since 2012, 24 extraordinary communities have been recognized. In 2016, the city of Milwaukee won the award for its initiative spanning more than three decades and including buddy" and storytelling programmes that bring together university students and older persons in the community.[41]

46. Another example of urban planning that takes into account the needs of young children are playgrounds for all ages, where children, parents and grandparents can interact. They are especially important for children in refugee camps, where living conditions are precarious. In this context, through the Playgrounds for Peace project run by the Middle East Children's Alliance, 13 playgrounds are facilitated in Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.[42] Catalytic Action, a non-governmental organization based in the United Kingdom, completed the *Ibtasem* project to build new playgrounds for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon in 2015 and 2016.[43] In both projects, local children, parents, teachers and professionals in the areas of child education, design and municipal governance were invited to participate in the process.

47. Involved parenting and grandparenting are essential to the promotion of healthy intergenerational relations. Positive parenting, which implies providing guidance and support for children in a friendly family atmosphere, rather than using authoritarian methods and punitive measures, has been supported in many countries.[44]

48. Positive parenting prevents violence and strengthens family resilience. The Triple P — Positive Parenting Programme is a parenting and family support programme established by the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland, Australia. The programme is designed to prevent and treat behavioural and emotional problems in children and adolescents. It draws on social learning, cognitive behavioural and developmental theories and aims to develop positive relationships, attitudes and conduct. It equips parents with the skills to manage family issues on their own. The programme has received many positive evaluations. For example, in a 15-year follow-up of Triple P methods in Western Australia, it was found that the programme had contributed to long-term improvements in literacy and numeracy for primary school children and better attendance for high school children.[45]

49. Some countries have adopted national plans on positive parenting. In South Africa, the Integrated Programme of Action on Violence against Women and Children (2013-2018) seeks to improve the capacity of families to protect children from abuse through positive parenting courses.[46] In Malta, under the National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024, childcare services are offered to parents, such as antenatal care and free nutrition for families in need. Professional services are used to report and identify family difficulties and seek solutions.

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[41] See http://gu.org/OURWORK/Programs/BestIntergenerationalCommunitiesAwards.aspx.

[42] See www.mecaforpeace.org/projects/playgrounds.

[43] See www.catalyticaction.org/all-project-list/fursa-playground/.

[44] See also Robert E. Larzelere and others, "Children and parents deserve better parental discipline research: critiquing the evidence for exclusively 'positive' parenting", *Marriage and Family Review*, vol. 53, issue 1 (2017). Available from www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01494929.2016.1145613.

[45] More information is available from www.triplep-parenting.com.

[46] See Chandré Gould and Catherine L. Ward, *Positive Parenting in South Africa*, policy brief No. 77 (Institute for Security Studies, 2015).

50. Grandparents are often relied upon to provide childcare, especially in countries where formal childcare is scarce. In southern Europe, twice as many grandparents care for their grandchildren as in the Nordic countries. In China, grandparents are often the only providers of childcare for fully employed parents. In Shanghai, as many as 90 per cent of young children are cared for by at least one grandparent.[47]

51. Research indicates that care provided by grandparents is beneficial for both grandparents and grandchildren. For instance, grandparents who raise grandchildren on average live longer and are physically and mentally healthier than grandparents who do not provide childcare and have positive self-recognition.[48] It should, however, be noted that extensive long hours of involvement in primary care by grandparents may have a negative effect on the behaviour of grandchildren and the depression rates of grandparents.[49]

52. It is widely acknowledged that volunteerism offers valuable experiences to every generation and provides opportunities to create stronger intergenerational links in communities. Children with elder mentors are less likely to use drugs and be absent from school and are more likely to enrol in college. A campaign in the United States, launched in 2015, had recruited more than 3,500 senior mentors by 2016. Through the campaign, senior citizens help children with extracurricular activities in school, teach community history and help with research.

53. According to United Nations Volunteers, youth volunteerism can build intergenerational cooperation, increases respect for community on the part of young people and creates innovative cross-generational, demographic solutions.[50] Youth and basic social services are among the five key areas within the United Nations Volunteers strategic framework 2014-2017, the aim of which is to increase United Nations volunteers to 10,000 by the end of 2017.

54. In the United States, community service is often a prerequisite to high school graduation. The content and requirements of the service vary from state to state, from providing services that benefit older persons or elementary school children to improving local facilities.[51] In Jiangsu Province, China, under the "senior citizen support bank" scheme, younger people register to volunteer care service for senior citizens in local communities and the hours spent volunteering are recorded to be paid back when the volunteers grow older. By 2015, 2,000 volunteer hours had been accumulated by people aged from 19 to 72.[52]

55. The integration of immigrant families remains challenging in many countries. Although the intended goal of immigration policies may be social integration, particular policies can result in empowering certain family members, specific generations or entire families. Policies favouring the family as a unit and supporting

[47] See ILO, *Women at Work*.

[48] See Sonja Hilbrand and others, "Caregiving within and beyond the family is associated with lower mortality for the caregiver: a prospective study", *Evolution and Human Behavior*, vol. 38, issue 3 (May 2017); Matthew Kaplan, Mariano Sanchez and Jaco Hoffman, "Intergenerational approaches for sustaining individual health and well-being", in *Intergenerational Pathways to a Sustainable Society* (Cham, Switzerland, Springer, 2016).

[49] See Ann Buchanan and Anna Rotkirch, *Grandfathers: Global Perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Family and Intimate Life (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[50] See United Nations Development Programme, "United Nations Volunteers youth volunteering strategy 2014-2017", 23 August 2013.

[51] See Donna St. George, "High school seniors in mad scramble to finish community service", *Washington Post*, 5 April 2015; Diane Loup, "Community service: mandatory or voluntary?", *School K-12*, paper 9 (2000), available from http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=slcek12.

[52] See Wang Xin and Cang Wei, "Volunteers pilot care 'bank' for elderly", *China Daily*, 4 August 2015.

intergenerational connections are more likely to tackle a number of challenges, such as social exclusion and poverty, often experienced by refugees. Diverse family backgrounds and the internal attributes of the families, such as cultural customs, values and a sense of filial duty, remain strong determinants of intergenerational relationships in a new environment.[53] The support provided by the host country in terms of access to education, health care and employment further enhances the social integration of migrant families.

56. Family reunification policies are essential for all migrants, in particular those leaving zones of conflict. In the United Kingdom, once a migrant has obtained refugee status or is eligible for humanitarian protection from the Government, he or she is granted legal permission to bring his or her spouse or child under the age of 18.[54] The focus is on children's rights in Norway, where a family that has been denied asylum can nevertheless obtain residency status when a child is proved to have a Norwegian identity.[55]

57. In the United States, a two-generation approach supporting parents and children is usually adopted in social programmes for immigrant families. For instance, English-as-a-second-language classes and the Family Literacy and Even Start programmes have helped hundreds of thousands of immigrant parents and children to improve their English language skills. Such programmes provide the first encounter of immigrant parents with local government and community services and help them to support their children's early learning and kindergarten readiness.[56]

58. Among the regional initiatives for raising awareness of the plight of refugee families was the conference on the impact of wars and conflicts on Arab families organized by the Doha International Family Institute and held on 17 and 18 October 2016 in Doha. The conference provided a platform for researchers and policymakers to discuss topics relating to family formation and breakdown during and post wars and conflicts, the social and economic dimensions and consequences of conflicts, including the gender dimensions, and the experience of many stakeholders helping to mitigate the effects of conflict on Arab families.[57]

III. Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes

A. General Assembly

59. During the discussions in the Third Committee at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, regional groups and Member States noted their initiatives in support of the implementation of the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes. The Group of African States emphasized that the plan of action on the African family adopted in 2004 had served as a guide to strengthen and

[53] See Valeria Bordone and Helga A. G. de Valk, "Intergenerational support among migrant families in Europe", *European Journal of Ageing*, vol. 13, issue 3 (September, 2016).

[54] See Melanie Gower and Terry McGuinness "The UK's refugee family reunion rules: striking the right balance?", briefing paper No. 07511 (United Kingdom, House of Commons, 28 November 2016); United Kingdom, Home Office, "Family reunion: for refugees and those with humanitarian protection", 29 July 2016.

[55] Janne Thu Ilstad and Hilde Bondevik, "Asylum-seeking children: affiliation to Norway or the 'home country'", *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 34, issue 2 (2016).

[56] See Maki Park, Margie McHugh and Caitlin Katsiaficas, "Serving immigrant families through two-generation programs" (Washington, D.C., Migration Policy Institute, 2016). Available from www.migrationpolicy.org/research/serving-immigrant-families-through-two-generation-programs-identifying-family-needs-and.

[57] See www.difi.org.qa/annual-conference/2016-annual-conference.

improve the general welfare and life chances of families on the continent. It has been an important tool to assist Member States in strengthening their capacities to develop policies and programmes to address the challenges faced by families, including widespread poverty and the weakening of intergenerational solidarity.

60. The European Union noted its efforts to promote gender equality and reconciliation between work and family life by investing in early childhood care, granting parental leave and improving the conditions of vulnerable families. The aim of the European Platform for Investing in Children is to break the cycle of disadvantage by tackling child poverty and social exclusion. In 2016, country-specific recommendations have been made in the areas of child poverty and work-family balance. Governments also noted that the State could serve as a model employer in promoting work-family balance.

61. The Group of Friends of the Family underscored the role of the family as a natural and core unit of society, responsible for the protection of children and their socialization and overall development, allowing children to grow up in an atmosphere of love, happiness and understanding. The Group also noted that family issues should be given special attention in line with the different traditions and cultures of Member States.

62. Several Member States noted the importance of family diversity, recognizing that various forms of families exist in different social, political and economic systems. As family structures have been evolving, they have become more diverse. Consequently, as society evolves, issues of gender identity must be taken into account. The recent appointment of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity by the Human Rights Council was seen by some Member States as a landmark development.

63. Governments described their efforts to create conditions that meet the needs of families, including investing in housing for indigenous families and providing support for young families. Another priority area for Governments is supporting people with family responsibilities by promoting family-friendly working conditions and the sharing of household responsibilities by couples. Other initiatives included the creation of nurseries and centres for senior citizens, state support and education loans for children in large families, and cash transfers for vulnerable households to reduce the intergenerational transfer of poverty.

64. Some Member States emphasized the importance of raising awareness of intergenerational family ties, enhancing the capacities and welfare of the family, promoting family values, supporting families with children with disabilities, strengthening the family by improving education and access to health services for children and women, providing funding for microprojects and maintaining centres for family counselling.

B. Commission for Social Development

65. At the fifty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development, Member States recognized the importance of families and family policies for the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, especially those relating to poverty eradication, healthy lives, education and gender equality. Member States noted the role of the family in human development and the importance of supporting the family at the different life stages of its members, from early childhood to old age.

66. Family-oriented policies, including cash transfers, investments in early childhood education and assistance for various types of families, including single-

headed households and families with persons with disabilities, have been credited with overall poverty reduction, better work-family balance and improved outcomes for children.

67. The Group of Friends of the Family noted that the family was one of the best societal institutions for inequality reduction and the enhancement of the well-being of its members and thus society at large. It was a force for social cohesion and integration and the protection of vulnerable family members. The family has primary responsibility for the socialization and education of children, including teaching the value of each gender, which deserves greater recognition in line with national laws and traditions.

68. Indonesia noted the role of the family in enhancing social integration and ensuring full and productive employment and emphasized that the failure to incorporate family policies into overall social development frameworks may result in greater inequalities. It highlighted its efforts to improve family planning services and education programmes for families.

69. In the Philippines, a cash transfer programme targets the most vulnerable families by providing monetary support to meet their basic and immediate needs with a longer-term goal of breaking the intergenerational transfer of poverty. An additional component of the programme is education for disaster preparedness and the preservation of indigenous cultures. The programme has been credited with lifting 1.5 million households out of poverty. Brazil attributed its success with poverty eradication to its inclusive definition of families in targeting social protection, while China highlighted a number of family-oriented policies for rural and urban areas.

70. The Dominican Republic, speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, emphasized that the challenges faced by all families should be addressed in order to fight social exclusion. Chile stated that care responsibilities should be shared by families, the State, the market and civil society in order to promote individual welfare. In Zambia, conditional cash transfers are targeted at vulnerable families, such as female-headed households and families affected by HIV/AIDS. In addition, training in conservation agriculture to improve household food security has been introduced.

71. In Senegal, efforts are being made to promote gender equality and reduce children's vulnerability through family policies. Support for vulnerable families, especially households below the poverty line, is a priority in Ecuador, where the Government is investing in efforts to reduce maternal mortality and support childhood education. Pakistan is directing support towards families with persons with disabilities.

72. Reforms of family laws, including legislation on property rights, the rights of parents, maternity protection and the prevention of various forms of violence to ensure gender equality, were noted by Maldives, Nepal and Trinidad and Tobago. Colombia emphasized its efforts to promote new models of masculinity.

73. Qatar noted the strong connection between family policies and several Sustainable Development Goals, especially those relating to health and well-being and gender equality, and emphasized its leadership role in promoting family issues at the United Nations.

74. Trinidad and Tobago emphasized preventive and remedial programmes that promote healthy family lifestyles, including violence prevention and national parenting programmes. Cuba underscored the importance of developing public policies to promote work-family balance and encourage better sharing of family

responsibilities between men and women, preventing family violence and improving intergenerational relations.

75. Considering the traditional family to be essential for sustainable development, Belarus has sought to strengthen the role of the family and family values in society and adopted practical measures of economic support, such as investments in housing and support for large families.

76. The European Union emphasized the diversity of family forms and noted its efforts to tackle child poverty and break the cycle of disadvantage with country-specific recommendations on child well-being and work-family balance. In Poland, a new monetary grant for families and a card offering discounts for families with three or more children have been introduced and policies to promote work-family balance are seen as indispensable to respond to demographic challenges.

77. South Africa noted that no single definition of family was capable of reflecting family diversity and that responding to the needs of different kinds of families was crucial. The white paper on families, in which guidelines on how to support families are presented, has been adopted in the country.

78. The United States emphasized that diverse families, such as those led by grandparents or unmarried couples, all share a common trait of caring for their family members and all deserve dignity and protection. The Government has expanded early education programmes and adopted anti-bullying measures to protect young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

C. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

79. The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized an expert group meeting on family policies and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, held on 12 and 13 May 2016 in New York. The focus of the meeting was advancing several family policy areas relating to Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 5. The current state of family research and the role of civil society in research dissemination and advocacy for family-friendly policies and programmes were also discussed.

80. The participants concluded that more attention should be paid to creating synergies among policy, research and practice and improving the communication of research to policymakers. They also made specific recommendations for stakeholders in the areas of poverty and hunger, health and well-being, inclusive and equitable high-quality education, gender equality, family and parental support for violence prevention, support for fathers in families, research and data collection, stakeholder cooperation and the role of civil society.[1]

81. In particular, the participants recommended the promotion of an integrated multigenerational approach to social protection that recognized care responsibilities throughout the life cycle. They also emphasized the importance of expanding family-friendly workplace flexibility and promoting the role of fathers throughout early parenthood. In the area of intergenerational relations, the experts recommended incorporating a family perspective into the design of policies targeted at young people in order to change harmful and risky behaviours and strengthen family relationships.[1]

82. The theme of the observance of the International Day of Families in 2016 was "Families, healthy lives and sustainable future", with a focus on the role of families for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3. An international panel of experts addressed safe and supportive family environments and children's well-being, as well as work-family balance and health outcomes. They also discussed the

health and well-being of young and older persons and the intergenerational transfer of poverty. The effects of involved fatherhood on families and ways in which fathers could be supported both at the workplace and in the home were also discussed.[58]

83. The Division for Social Policy and Development, in cooperation with civil society, organized a number of awareness-raising events that provided a venue for sharing good practices in family policy. Experts made recommendations on how to develop and/or improve existing family policies as tools for advancing the 2030 Agenda.

84. An international conference on the theme "Sustainable Development Goals and gender equality: the role of family policies and exchange of good practices", organized by the Confederation of Family Organizations in the European Union, in cooperation with the Division for Social Policy and Development, was held on 19 and 20 April 2016 in Amsterdam. The conference put a spotlight on family policies that contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It also highlighted unpaid care, shared responsibilities within the household and the role of civil society in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.[59]

85. The Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region held its fifth regional symposium on the theme "Asian families: changes and consistency" in Seoul from 3 to 5 November 2016. The symposium provided a platform for the exchange of good practices in family policy development in Asia. The Aspiration for Sustainability, Innovation and Applicability project was recognized for its outstanding initiatives that had enhanced family well-being. The Division for Social Policy and Development participated in the symposium and encouraged further sharing of good practices in the region.[60]

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

86. The International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes have served as catalysts for a number of initiatives at the national and international levels, including many family-oriented policies and programmes. In particular, the framework has allowed the strengthening of family policies and the sharing of good practices in the areas of poverty eradication, work-family balance, intergenerational issues and related areas.

87. Family policies and programmes and families themselves can further contribute to the attainment of several Sustainable Development Goals and targets. In particular, family-focused initiatives to reduce poverty and hunger and promote the well-being of all at all ages can boost development efforts, contribute to better outcomes for children and help to break the intergenerational transfer of poverty.

88. There is a growing realization that universal and gender-sensitive social protection systems are key to ensuring poverty reduction. In addition, targeted cash transfers for vulnerable families, such as those headed by women, have been proved to be most effective when accompanied by other measures, such as access to basic services, high-quality education and health services.

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[58] More information about the observance of the International Day of Families in 2016 is available from www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-day-of-families/2016idf.html.

[59] Materials from the conference are available from www.coface-eu.org/europe/international-conference-sustainable-development-goals-and-gender-equality/.

[60] More information about the symposium is available from www.cifa-net.org/list.aspx?urlkey=3RN85ONGmWxaCb85.

89. Many Member States have provided family allowances and broader social protection measures to assist the most vulnerable families. Such initiatives often go beyond providing benefits and include comprehensive strategies with regard to the labour market, education, health care and other social services. Many stakeholders have also recognized the importance of promoting an integrated, multigenerational approach to social protection, sensitive to care responsibilities.

90. Policies to promote work-family balance, including universal access to high-quality childcare, play a crucial role in poverty and inequality reduction and ensuring gender equality and higher female participation in the labour market. Cost-effective policy solutions to support work-family balance have been pursued by many Member States and include the provision of high-quality childcare, the expansion of family leave and paid sick days and measures to improve workplace flexibility.

91. There is growing recognition that gender inequalities at work can be reduced if actions are taken to eliminate the disadvantages faced by women on account of their reproductive functions. The promotion of the equal sharing of unpaid work at home, on the one hand, and by the family and society at large, on the other hand, is therefore key to ensuring gender equality at home and in the workplace. The ILO labour standards, including the relevant conventions and recommendations, serve as a guide for efforts at the national level in this area.

92. Member States have undertaken a number of initiatives to strengthen intergenerational relations within families, in particular the promotion of intergenerational living arrangements and proximity living for extended family members. Such initiatives tend to improve intergenerational relations and have been found to promote the autonomy of children and older persons and their sense of security. They also help to reduce the growing costs of living. Similarly, initiatives to promote involved and positive parenting and support the role of grandparents have been found to be beneficial in advancing social integration and solidarity between generations.

93. Member States are encouraged to consider the following actions as part of their efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda:

(a) Step up efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes, in particular in the areas of fighting poverty and hunger and ensuring the well-being of all at all ages;

(b) Promote work-family balance as conducive to the well-being of children and gender equality, through flexible working arrangements, parental leave, childcare provision and initiatives to promote the equal sharing of household responsibilities, including care work, between men and women;

(c) Invest in family policies and programmes that promote strong intergenerational interactions, such as intergenerational living arrangements and parental education, in an effort to promote inclusive urbanization and intergenerational solidarity.